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THE IMPORTANCE OF A STUDY-PROGRAM FOR HIGH-SCHOOL PUPILS

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It has been clearly shown that the methods of study among pupils in the elementary schools of our country are very poor.¹ Although no similar task has been undertaken with reference to conditions in the high schools, a visit to any high school or college would convince anyone that many students who are doing work in these institutions have no conception of a correct and profitable method of study.

This condition presents one of the greatest drawbacks to efficient work in our modern high schools. Every term a great number of pupils are passed from the grammar schools into the high schools, and many of them are absolutely ignorant as to what it means to grapple with an intellectual problem. They have become so accustomed to kindergarten pabulum that they are bewildered when confronted with a task that requires power of concentration and perseverance. Unless some high-school teacher is wise and sympathetic enough to help them find out how to study, they flounder around helplessly for a few months, or at most a year or two, finally to drop out, disgusted with school, books, teacher, and education, because they never really learned how to work.

A few years ago while visiting a high school my attention was called to the poor grade of work being done. The principal blamed the grade teachers for inadequate preparation, which happened to be faulty enough in that particular school. I became interested in the situation and began to take note of the various things that took place about me. During a study period I noticed that a large proportion of the pupils studied no less than three or four lessons during the hour. These pupils thought

¹ *Teaching Children to Study*. By Lida B. Earhart, Boston, 1909.

they had prepared their lessons for the entire day in that one study period. The rest of their time that was not spent in recitation was wasted in looking around, talking, writing notes, and other kinds of idleness.

As the standard of work was not so high as desired in our high school, I began to investigate very carefully the nature of the instruction and the conditions of study. A few tests brought out the facts that many of our pupils did not know how to study properly, that many did not have any regular habits of work, and that very few did any home study. They worked well while tasks were easy, but when difficulties were encountered in the work on which they were engaged it was dropped at once and a new task was sought. They were lacking in that discipline which enables a pupil to stick to a task even though it be difficult and perhaps unpleasant.

In order to establish more regular habits of work, I had study-program cards printed with directions for study, and each pupil was required to make out a definite program for the term. (The form of these cards and the directions for study which are printed on the back are shown below.) Duplicate copies were placed on file on the assembly-room desk, so that the teacher in charge could closely supervise the work. Each pupil was also asked to provide for regular study hours at home, and the parents were urged to see that the program was carried out. In the course of a few weeks the advantages of regular hours for work became so apparent that the pupils entered into the plan with enthusiasm.

During the two and a half years that study has been closely supervised and regular programs for each pupil strictly followed, three things have been accomplished with more or less success: (1) the problem of discipline has been practically solved; (2) considerable improvement has been made in scholarship; (3) regular hours of home study have been provided for by the large majority of the students.

Discipline.—Discipline is a minor problem in a busy school. The pupil who knows his task, has a regular time to perform it, and undertakes it systematically, will have no time to create

disturbance. Furthermore the busy pupil will have an interest in his work and progress in school, and consequently will have no desire to engage during school hours in things that have no close connection with his regular work.

PUPIL'S STUDY-PROGRAM		
Name.....		Grade.....
Hour	Study	Recite
9:00		
9:45		
10:30		
11:10		
1:15		
2:00		
2:45		
3:20		

(over)

DIRECTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Follow your program regularly.
2. If possible, study your lesson immediately after the assignment is made.
3. Take brief notes and afterwards re-study by outline.
4. Use dictionary and reference books for points not clearly comprehended.
5. Concentrate the mind so that outside interests will not frequently disturb your study.
6. Do not try to commit exact words until you understand their content.
7. Connect the important facts of the new lesson with facts previously learned.
8. Make comparisons and contrasts when possible.
9. The extra effort spent on preparation pays the greatest intellectual dividends.
10. Carefully review and think over the previous lesson before beginning the next.

Table I shows the numbers of high-school pupils receiving various grades in deportment before and after the introduction

of regular study periods. The following system of grading was used:

- A+=100 to 96 per cent
 A = 95 to 91 per cent
 B+= 90 to 86 per cent
 B = 85 to 81 per cent
 C+= 80 to 76 per cent
 C = 75 to 70 per cent=conditioned
 X = below 70 per cent=failed

TABLE I

GRADES	FRESHMEN		SOPHOMORES AND JUNIORS	
	Without Program	With Program	Without Program	With Program
A+.....	2	30	0	27
A.....	13	7	16	13
B+.....	16	2	15	4
B.....	6	2	5	0
C+.....	2	0	4	0
C.....	6	0	4	0
X.....	0	0	0	0

The first column shows the deportment grades of a class of forty-five Freshmen who followed no regular program of study. Column two shows the grades of the Freshman class that entered the same high school the following year. This class was taught in the grammar grades by the same teachers and was graded in deportment by the same high-school teachers as the previous class. The better standing of the second class in deportment is due very largely to individual study-programs regularly followed and a more careful supervision of the study period. Columns three and four show the deportment grades of forty-four Sophomores and Juniors before and after the adoption of regular study-programs.

Scholarship.—Latin was chosen for the following table for the reason that the pupils have been taught by the same Latin teacher for the period represented. Other subjects might have been selected—for example, history or English, to which more home study was given by the majority of the pupils—which would have shown much greater improvement, but in the other subjects no one teacher had charge of all the work. The im-

provement in the Latin grades is chiefly due to systematic study at school rather than to home study.

TABLE II

Grade	Latin I: Without Program	Latin I: With Program	Caesar: Without Program	Cicero: With Program	Vergil: With Program
A+.....	1	9	2	17	18
A.....	7	7	15	7	10
B+.....	7	5	7	7	4
B.....	1	6	4	2	0
C+.....	2	4	3	0	1
C.....	5	6	1	0	0
X.....	9	4	1	0	0

Columns one and two of Table II show the relative grades in first-year Latin of two classes: the first followed no regular study-programs, the second had regular programs. Both classes were taught in the grammar grades by the same teachers and in the high school by the same Latin teacher.

Columns three, four, and five show the records of thirty-three pupils in Latin for three consecutive years. In the work in Caesar no regular study-programs were observed, but during the next two years regular programs of study were conscientiously followed by most of the pupils. While the progress in efficiency as shown in the table is quite noticeable, yet the change cannot be as significant to the reader as to the Latin teacher who was familiar with the individuality of the pupils and their habits and methods of work.

Home study.—No record is available to show how many pupils did home study before the adoption of the study-programs, but it is safe to say that the proportion was very small. Neither can any definite record be procured that will show the amount or the number of pupils who did home study during the first year the program was used. The following charts are based upon the grades and home-study hours of the first term of the current school year.

Chart I shows the grades of the first-year Latin class, arranged according to the time spent in home study. The best three grades in the column showing no home study were made

by repeaters. This is the first term that these pupils have followed a regular study-program.

Chart II shows the grades of the second-year Latin class. The pupil making the best grade in the no-home-study column is very bright, but is inclined to take life easy. The failure in the second column is due to excessive use of cigarettes. This is the second year that these pupils have used a regular study-program.

Chart III shows the standing of the third-year Latin class. The failure of the pupil who is doing no home study is due to indolence. This class has followed a study-program for two and a half years.

Chart IV shows the grades of the fourth-year Latin class, which has followed a regular program of study for two and a half years.

Chart V gives a summary of the number of high-school pupils from whom definite and reliable records are obtainable, arranged according to the time given to home study.

Chart VI gives the average standing in Latin for the first term of the current school year of the pupils represented in Chart V, classified according to the time spent in home study. This chart shows that the pupils spending from one to one and a half hours in home study take the highest standing. The pupils who do less than this amount are either poor students or very bright and inclined to get off with as little work as possible, while those who spend more than this amount of time may be classed as the plodders.

CHART I

X							
X	C						
X	C+	B	C+				
X	C+	B	B				
X	C+	B	B+				
C	B	B+	A	C			
C+	B+	B+	A	C			
A	B+	A	A+	B			
A+	A+	A+	A+	B+			
A+	A+	A+	A+	B+	C+		
Hours	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3

CHART II

				C			
	X	C+					
	C	B					
	B+	A					
	B+	A	B	C			
C	B+	A+	B	C			
B	A	A+	B	B+			
A	A+	A+	B+	A+			
Hours	0	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	3

6. "By preparing my work regularly I find that I not only have better lessons but also have more time for leisure."

7. "The study-program has proved so beneficial to me in the preparation of my lessons that I now follow a regular program for all of my work."

8. "I find that by following a regular program of study I always study each lesson whether I accomplish anything or not. At least, I always know something about each lesson."

9. "I had the habit of always putting off my work until I felt just right for study, and as a result made very poor grades, but since I have adopted a regular study-program my interest in my work has greatly increased and I am no longer ashamed of my grades."